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March 6, 2002

Attorney Jeff Newman
One Story Terrace
Marblehead, MA 01945

Dear Attorney Newman;

On March 6, 2002, I received a phone call from Mike Alcott who reported that he was experiencing symptoms of grief. Mr. Alcott stated that on March 5th or 6th he looked at the front page of the Boston Globe and saw a picture of Father James Talbott, a priest at Boston College High School who sexually abused him in September 1976.

Mr. Alcott remembers the incident very vividly. It occurred in September 1976 in the boys' locker room. He recalls that Father Talbott approached him and when Mr. Alcott went to step back he threatened him, saying, "you don't want to do that." Father Talbott had a reputation as a "tough guy" according to Mr. Alcott, and was an emotionally overwhelming figure. Mr. Alcott reports that then he and Father Talbott engaged in oral sex.

Mr. Alcott's abuser was in a position of trust, making the act of sexual abuse even more traumatic and something he could not deal with in adolescence. Mr. Alcott did not repress the incident - this is not a situation of repressed memories - rather he felt more shame and worthlessness. Mr. Alcott believed for years that there was something wrong with him that he could be hurt so badly. Only after reading the article in March in the Boston Globe did he come to understand that he was molested - he was a victim.

Mr. Alcott's feelings of shame were so intense he couldn't look at Father Talbott. Mr. Alcott reports that two months later he flunked out of Boston College High School. He said, "I gave up...I felt totally worthless." Mr. Alcott's symptoms of psychological maladjustment are often seen in individuals who have been sexually abused. Mr. Alcott's unwillingness to call the molestation by Father Talbott as abuse is not atypical. Mr. Alcott no longer felt safe, was disrespectful of authority figures and engaged in relationships only superficially. After the molestation Mr. Alcott needed to begin a program of ego building/strengthening involving the participation of family members to counteract the effects of the trauma. Mr. Alcott needed support and nurturing; rather than being made to feel shame and worthlessness.

Mr. Alcott describes a very dysfunctional lifestyle after the molestation. The pain and anger he dealt with by acting out – committing serious acts of delinquency. In February 1978 he tried to burn down his parents' home three times. The third time he was successful. Mr. Alcott was trying, in his mind, to get his parents to hear his anger. He was furious that he was unable to share his experience with them. Mr. Alcott reports that he started to feel desperate – he didn't fit in anywhere.

Mr. Alcott became a polysubstance abuser as a way of "numbing" his feelings. He became lost and only wanted to look "cool" – no matter the personal cost. Within a year of his molestation he was intoxicated every weekend.

Another change in Mr. Alcott's behavior was the intensification of his narcissistic attitude. He was only concerned about pleasing himself, with no thought for consequences. Court-ordered therapy was unsuccessful both because he was too ashamed to admit the molestation and because he was unable to form a strong therapeutic relationship.

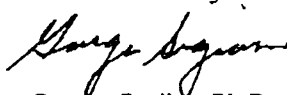
Sexual intercourse became a dissociative experience – always a fantasy, never real. Clearly Mr. Alcott had invested a great deal of psychic energy into protecting himself from the anxiety-provoking details of the past. His feelings of worthlessness intensified his beliefs that everything had to be his fault.

Mr. Alcott began a transformation while in prison. The death of his father awakened feelings of grief. Having never previously recognized the capacity to feel strongly about and for others, his grief reaction facilitated a healing process. His faith helped him to believe that he had worth.

Mr. Alcott's commitment to Alcoholics Anonymous and other programs were also helpful. The commitments to the programs were much more genuine and intense than previous attempts. Mr. Alcott achieved his goal of becoming a whole person – a loving parent, ex-husband, and full family member. Mr. Alcott has lost a lot of years in his adult life that could have been productive. His courage and his need to grow especially after losing so much enabled him to alter his life.

The sexual molestation of Mr. Alcott by Father Talbott changes his clinical picture. Rather than diagnoses of Conduct Disorder and Narcissistic Personality Disorder, Mr. Alcott now is clearly identified as a trauma survivor. Many of his behavior disorders could be viewed as symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Mr. Alcott needs to continue his emotional growth by seeing someone who specializes in PTSD and survivors of sexual abuse.

Sincerely,



George Svajian, Ph.D.

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